Skeletons in the Closet

During the past several years, beginning with Marcel Ophuls's epic documentary, "The Sorrow and the Pity," and continuing with Louis Malle's passionately dispassionate "Lacombe, Lucien," the French cinema has been engaged in the excavation of buried and often shameful aspects of the Nazi occupation period. Attacking the Gaullist myth of glorious national resistance, these films argue that a wide range of French citizens either acquiesced in or eagerly welcomed French Fascism and its collaborationist policies.

Two films have just arrived from France that place this story within personal narratives, focusing on that most carefully obscured of occupation secrets—the betrayal of French Jews by many of their fellow citizens. In Michel Drach's LES VIOLONS DU BAL, a reminiscence of his own fugitive boyhood during the war, one extended sequence shows Parisian Jews herded into buses while, behind closed shutters, the French aristocracy fraternizes with and fondles their German conquerors.

His own emerging ethnic consciousness as a boy is caught by Drach's beautiful and responsive 9-year-old son, David. Shipped to the provinces under an assumed name, David and his mother (played with affecting desperation by Drach's wife, Marie-José Nat) are lied to and [illegible] niless by those few willing to shelter the bitter realism gives a edge to what would wise be a pleasing but tially sentimental me of mama and boy toward the freedom Swiss border. The film saved from its own sen[illegible]ly romantic style by its fine observation of the disintegration of bourgeois family life under the pressure of the war and of defeat.

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10 pt. - Staff Literal

Nat, Drach: Fighting toward freedom

Anger: Michel Mitrani's BLACK THURSDAY is also drawn from a personal memoir but Mitrani is more interested in settling scores than in evoking atmosphere. He has adapted the memoir of a French student who tried to warn and aid Parisian Jews on Thursday, July 16, 1942, when police rounded up 13,000 of them. Of the 4,500 Jewish children among them, none returned from the camps to which they were sent. Mitrani aims his anger also at those trusting Jewish families who went off meekly to their doom, confident that their French citizenship and their fellow countrymen would protect them against anything more serious than temporary displacement.

The haunting images of dazed Jewish

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